

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 (Canceled)

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 1, wherein Hb is a fluorine-substituted alkyl group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an alkyl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms or a fluorine-substituted aryl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms.

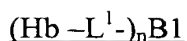
Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 1, wherein L¹ is a single bond or a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of an alkylene group, a fluorine-substituted alkylene group, -O-, -S-, -CO-, -NR-, -SO₂-, and a combination thereof, and R is hydrogen or an alkyl group having 1 to 30 carbon atoms.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 1, wherein n is an integer of 3 to 9.

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 1, wherein B1 is an n-valent group comprising at least three rings.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): ~~The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 1, wherein B1 is an n-valent group~~ A liquid crystal composition comprising liquid crystal molecules and an alignment promoter represented by the formula (I) in an amount of 0.01 to 20 wt.% based on the amount of the liquid crystal molecules:

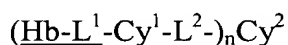
(I)



in which Hb is a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an aromatic group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms and an aliphatic substituted oligosiloxanoxy group having 1 to 40 carbon atoms; L¹ is a single bond or a divalent linking group; n is an integer of 2 to 12; and B1 is an n-valent group comprising at least two rings and showing an excluded volume effect.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 5, wherein ~~B1 is an n-valent group~~ the alignment promoter is represented by the formula (II):

(II)



in which Hb is a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an aromatic group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms and an aliphatic substituted oligosiloxanoxy group having 1 to 40 carbon atoms; L¹ is a single bond or a divalent linking group; Cy¹ is a divalent cyclic group; L² is a single bond or a divalent linking group; n is an integer of 2 to 12; and Cy² is an n-valent cyclic group.

Claim 8 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 7, wherein L² is a single bond or a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of an alkylene group, an alkenylene group, an alkynylene group, -O-, -S-, -CO-, -NR-, -SO₂- and a combination thereof, and R is hydrogen or an alkyl group having 1 to 30 carbon atoms.

Claim 9 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 7, wherein each of Cy¹ and Cy² independently is an aromatic group or a heterocyclic group.

Claim 10 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 9, wherein Cy^1 is a divalent aromatic group.

Claim 11 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 10, wherein the divalent aromatic group of Cy^1 is combined with another aromatic ring by a single bond, vinylenic bond or ethynylene bond, or is condensed with another aromatic ring.

Claim 12 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 9, wherein Cy^2 is an n-valent aromatic group.

Claim 13 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 7, wherein the cyclic groups represented by Cy^1 and Cy^2 form a plane molecular structure as a whole.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 1 ~~4~~ 6, wherein B1 contains a photosensitive group that changes its chemical structure when absorbing light energy.

Claim 15 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 14, wherein the photosensitive group contains a double bond selected from the group consisting of $C=C$, $C=N$ and $N=N$.

Claim 16 (Original): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 14, wherein the photosensitive group is an aromatic azo group.

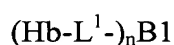
Claim 17 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 4 6, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are discotic liquid crystal molecules.

Claim 18 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 4 6, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are rod-like liquid crystal molecules.

Claim 19 (Currently Amended): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 4 6, wherein the liquid crystal molecules have polymerizable groups.

Claim 20 (Currently Amended): An optically anisotropic element which comprises a liquid crystal layer comprising liquid crystal molecules and an orientation layer provided on one side of the liquid crystal layer, wherein the liquid crystal layer further contains an alignment promoter represented by the formula (I) in an amount of 0.005 to 0.5 g/m²:

(I)



in which Hb is a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an aromatic group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms ~~or~~ and an aliphatic substituted oligosiloxanoxy group having 1 to 40 carbon atoms; L¹ is a single bond or a divalent linking group; n is an integer of 2 to 12; and B1 is an n-valent group comprising at least two rings.

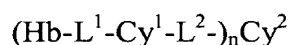
Claim 21 (Original): The optically anisotropic element as defined in claim 20, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are aligned at an average inclined angle of 50° to 90°.

Claim 22 (Original): The optically anisotropic element as defined in claim 20, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are aligned and polymerized while keeping alignment.

Claim 23 (Canceled)

Claim 24 (New): A liquid crystal composition comprising liquid crystal molecules and an alignment promoter represented by the formula (II) in an amount of 0.01 to 20 wt.% based on the amount of the liquid crystal molecules:

(II)



in which Hb is a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an aromatic group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms and an aliphatic substituted oligosiloxanoxy group having 1 to 40 carbon atoms; L^1 is a single bond or a divalent linking group; Cy^1 is a divalent cyclic group; L^2 is a single bond or a divalent linking group; n is an integer of 2 to 12; and Cy^2 is an n-valent cyclic group.

Claim 25 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein Hb is a fluorine-substituted alkyl group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an alkyl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms or a fluorine-substituted aryl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms.

Claim 26 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein L^1 is a single bond or a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of an alkylene

group, a fluorine-substituted alkylene group, -O-, -S-, -CO-, -NR-, -SO₂- and a combination thereof, and R is hydrogen or an alkyl group having 1 to 30 carbon atoms.

Claim 27 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein n is an integer of 3 to 9.

Claim 28 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein L² is a single bond or a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of an alkylene group, an alkenylene group, an alkynylene group, -O-, -S-, -CO-, -NR-, -SO₂- and a combination thereof, and R is hydrogen or an alkyl group having 1 to 30 carbon atoms.

Claim 29 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein each of Cy¹ and Cy² independently is an aromatic group or a heterocyclic group.

Claim 30 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 29, wherein Cy¹ is a divalent aromatic group.

Claim 31 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 30, wherein the divalent aromatic group of Cy¹ is combined with another aromatic ring by a single bond, vinylene bond or ethynylene bond, or is condensed with another aromatic ring.

Claim 32 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 29, wherein Cy² is an n-valent aromatic group.

Claim 33 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein the cyclic groups represented by Cy^1 and Cy^2 form a plane molecular structure as a whole.

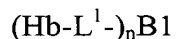
Claim 34 (New): The liquid crystal composition comprising as defined in claim 24, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are discotic liquid crystal molecules.

Claim 35 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are rod-like liquid crystal molecules.

Claim 36 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 24, wherein the liquid crystal molecules have polymerizable groups.

Claim 37 (New): A liquid crystal composition comprising liquid crystal molecules and an alignment promoter represented by the formula (I) in an amount of 0.01 to 20 wt.% based on the amount of the liquid crystal molecules:

(I)



in which Hb is a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an aromatic group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms and an aliphatic substituted oligosiloxanoxy group having 1 to 40 carbon atoms; L^1 is a single bond or a divalent linking group; n is an integer of 2 to 12; B1 is an n-valent group comprising at least two rings, and

wherein B1 contains a photosensitive group that changes its chemical structure when absorbing light energy.

Claim 38 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein Hb is a fluorine-substituted alkyl group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an alkyl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms or a fluorine-substituted aryl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms.

Claim 39 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein L¹ is a single bond or a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of an alkylene group, a fluorine-substituted alkylene group, -O-, -S-, -CO-, -NR-, -SO₂- and a combination thereof, and R is hydrogen or an alkyl group having 1 to 30 carbon atoms.

Claim 40 (New): A liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein n is an integer of 3 to 9.

Claim 41 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein B1 is an n-valent group comprising at least three rings.

Claim 42 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein the photosensitive group contains a double bond selected from the group consisting of C=C, C=N and N=N.

Claim 43 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein the photosensitive group is an aromatic azo group.

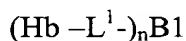
Claim 44 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are discotic liquid crystal molecules.

Claim 45 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein the liquid crystal molecules are rod-like liquid crystal molecules.

Claim 46 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 37, wherein the liquid crystal molecules have polymerizable groups.

Claim 47 (New): A liquid crystal composition comprising rod-like liquid crystal molecules and an alignment promoter represented by the formula (I) in an amount of 0.01 to 20 wt.% based on the amount of the liquid crystal molecules:

(I)



in which Hb is a hydrophobic group selected from the group consisting of an aliphatic group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an aromatic group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms and an aliphatic substituted oligosiloxanoxy group having 1 to 40 carbon atoms; L^1 is a single bond or a divalent linking group; n is an integer of 2 to 12; and B1 is an n-valent group comprising at least two rings.

Claim 48 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 47, wherein Hb is a fluorine-substituted alkyl group having 4 to 40 carbon atoms, an alkyl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms or a fluorine-substituted aryl group having 6 to 40 carbon atoms.

Claim 49 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 47, wherein L^1 is a single bond or a divalent linking group selected from the group consisting of an alkylene group, a fluorine-substituted alkylene group, -O-, -S-, -CO-, -NR-, -SO₂- and a combination thereof, and R is hydrogen or an alkyl group having 1 to 30 carbon atoms.

Claim 50 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 47, wherein n is an integer of 3 to 9.

Claim 51 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 47, wherein B1 is an n-valent group comprising at least three rings.

Claim 52 (New): The liquid crystal composition as defined in claim 47, wherein the rod-like liquid crystal molecules have polymerizable groups.